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Ministry of Advanced Education

NEW HEALTH STUDIES DEGREE TO BE OFFERED BY UBCO

KELOWNA – A new interdisciplinary bachelor of arts degree in health studies, which will form the backbone of University of B.C. Okanagan's health focus, begins its first classes in September, Kelowna-Lake Country MLA Al Horning announced today.

"UBC O is developing a strong core of health-related programs whose graduates will contribute to healthy communities in the Okanagan," said Horning. "Students taking this new degree program will be able to work in a variety of public and private health settings – and they'll also have a great foundation to go on to become doctors, nurses and social workers."

Students in the new health studies program can specialize in one of two areas. In health policy and evaluation, they will learn what factors determine how healthy people are, what influences those factors, and how public policy can use this knowledge to make populations healthier. In health and sustainability, students will focus on how social systems and structures influence the health of communities – and how to come up with innovative solutions for groups facing more health challenges than the norm.

"As part of our Pacific Leadership Agenda, we are ensuring excellent health services are available to every British Columbian according to their needs," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell. "To do that we need innovative programs like this one, which provides the knowledge, perspective and tools graduates will use to help improve the health of people in our province."

Students will be given practical, hands-on experience with local agencies and community groups, working with other members of the health-care team. For example, students could be placed alongside nursing students in an Interior Health Authority agency analyzing data that will help guide the development of patient discharge programs.

"Graduates of our new health studies program will be well prepared to tackle some of the most challenging issues facing our society today with the broad knowledge base they will develop," said Doug Owram, deputy vice chancellor of UBC Okanagan. "The program will also serve as the home for upper-level core courses for a range of social and life sciences, and will be supported with participation from the entire university."

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Since 2003, the minister has approved more than 130 undergraduate and graduate degrees, including a master of fine arts in interdisciplinary studies at UBC Okanagan earlier this year. The new degrees are helping B.C. improve its competitiveness and productivity through education and skills training, part of government's Pacific Leadership Agenda.

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